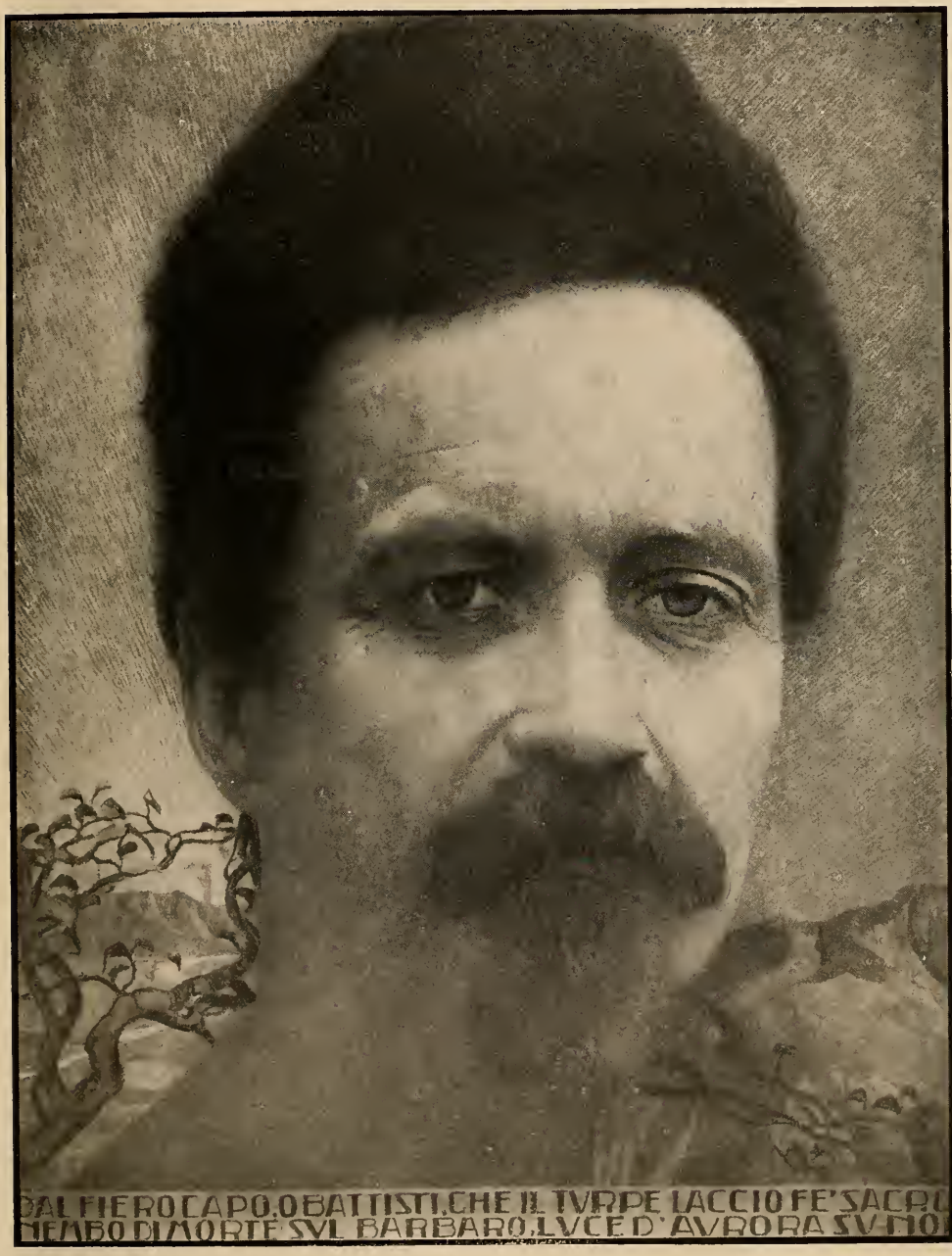
Cesare Battisti and the Trentino

by Dr. Giovanni Lorenzoni of Trento



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Cesare Battisti and the Trentino

(Feb. 4, 1875—July 12, 1916)

A sketch of his life, character and ideals

by Dr. Giovanni Lorenzoni of Trento

with an appendix on the Venezia Tridentina
thirteen illustrations and one map

"O Italy, thy martyrs are our own,
And the whole world's redeemed again by Love.
Nothing more sacred is than life, except
The joy of its surrender. Mother of grief,
Help us to forget not what it cost to write
In blood across thy borderland the words
'Italia Redenta'"

—Robert Underwood Johnson

by permission of the author from his poem "Italia Redenta"

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Note on the Author

Dr. Giovanni Lorenzoni, born in Trentino, 1873, was a friend of Cesare Battisti and his companion for a while at the University. He was fifteen years ago professor of Political Economy at the Italian Department of the University at Innsbruck. After this department was closed in 1905 by the imposition of the pan-germanists, he went to Italy, where he was entrusted with several missions by the Italian Government. The most important of these was an inquiry upon social conditions in Sicily, which lasted three years. The results of these investigations were published in his book, "Sicilia" (two vols. Tip. del Senato Rome, 1910). In the years 1911-1915 he was General Secretary of the International Institute of Agriculture, founded by the King of Italy, in Rome, at the suggestion of an American citizen, Mr. David Lubin, of California, and in which fifty-four countries, including the United States, are represented. Dr. Lorenzoni left this position in 1915 to volunteer in the Royal Italian Army Alpine Corps, where he served for twenty months. When captain he was called back by the Italian Government, which had appointed him professor at the Royal University of Macerata. He is now Vice-President of the Political Association Italiani Irredenti, of Rome (Trentino Section), which practically includes all Trentino people. At present he is on a special mission in the United States for this society and for the redeemed countries together with Colonel Pizzarello and Dr. Furlani.

The Italian Bureau of Public Information.

PREFACE

Having the pleasure of being in America as a representative of the Italian regions now redeemed from Austria, together with Colonel Pizzarello and Dr. Furlani, I have had the opportunity of realizing that the American public is greatly interested in the problems of the Trentino and the Adriatic, because of which Italy mainly entered the war.

But I also noticed that the English literature on those problems was very scant. On this fact mostly depends the rather limited knowledge the English-speaking people have of the principal dates and episodes concerning our war and the part taken in it by the population of the then unredeemed provinces.

Having had the privilege of knowing Cesare Battisti since his youth and of having been one of his friends, I was induced to publish this pamphlet on him. This work is an amplification of a lecture that I gave on this subject in some American cities. I have reproduced in it several of Cesare Battisti's letters, which were already published by me in the "Nuova Antologia" of July 15, 1916, and some others which became known to me afterwards.

I would be really glad if this modest work of mine could contribute towards intensifying the interest that the great and noble people of America have for our sacred cause, which is, at the same time, the cause of all the Allies.

Sixty-six times the barbarians invaded Italy when in control of Venezia Tridentina (Trentino and Upper Adige). From now on this must be stopped. For that purpose Italy must possess her natural frontier, the high wall which divides the north from the south, the watershed between the Black Sea and the Adriatic Sea, right and left of the Brennero Pass where, since last November, our victorious flag is floating.

It is with deep satisfaction that I can state that no objections have been formulated in this country against the just claims of Italy on this point. The American people have understood very clearly that Italy, claiming her natural border in the Alps, was acting not only in defence of herself but also in defence of all the Allies against the dangers of Pan-Germanism.

Dr. Giovanni Lorenzoni.

New York, February 26, 1919.

Cesare Battisti and the Trentino

(Feb. 4, 1875–July 12, 1916)

CESARE BATTISTI is one of the few men who can be called really great because of what they were and what they did. Great, above all, because of the wonderful sacrifice of his life for an idea.

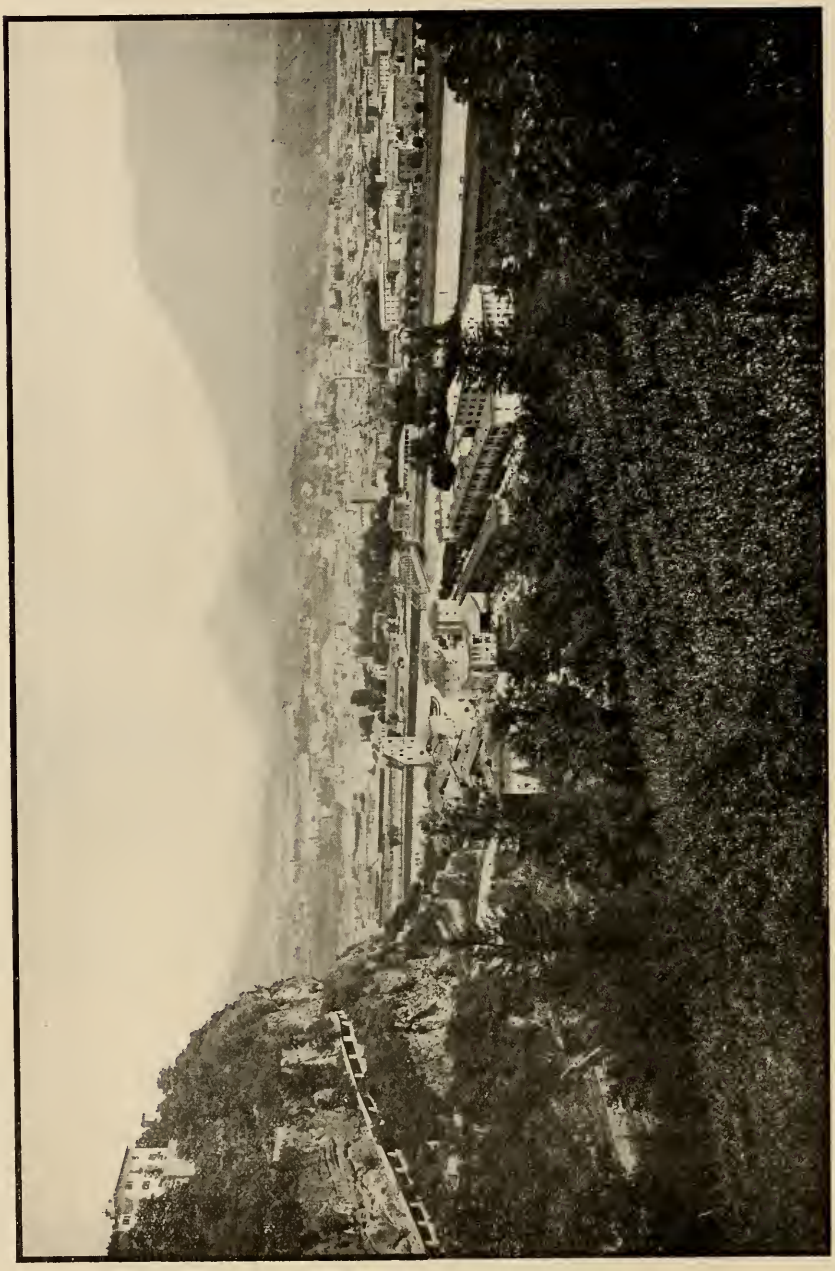
He was born in Trento, February 4, 1875, of wealthy parents, and at Trento he completed his first academic studies. The first years of his youth he was rather delicate in health; the systematic cultivation of sport gave him strength, and he finally acquired such endurance as not only to withstand the hardships of seven months' service in the high mountains as a simple private in the Alpini, but, as he writes, even "getting fat."

Physically Battisti was handsome. Tall, slender, his movements naturally graceful; dark, intelligent eyes animated his fine, pallid features framed by thick, black, somewhat curly hair. Age and experience did not mar his looks, rather they added majesty and strength.

Bodily strength was matched by an equally vigorous mind. Never did I see Cesare Battisti tired, and yet the amount of work he took upon himself was enormous. Already as a student he was not satisfied to attend only one university; while attending courses in history and geography at the Regio Istituto Superiore in Florence and attaining his degree in these subjects with the highest number of points, he was at the same time studying law at the University of Graz, where he also took the prescribed examinations, and where I had the pleasure of being his companion and friend.

His mind was not given to abstract research or theoretical speculations, but to the investigation and examination of practical problems affecting the welfare of his country, which was the sole object of his work as a scientist, journalist, politician and soldier.

In fact, almost all his writings deal with Trentino; the principal one, entitled "Il Trentino," published in 1898, is an ad-



Panorama of Trento

mirable anthropo-geographic essay, conceived and written after the method and classical style of the great Elisée Reclus.

Battisti never wasted a moment of his time; he studied when traveling, and when serving various short terms of imprisonment imposed by the Austrian Government because of his political activities. In the evenings, instead of resting or frequenting cafes (where he was never seen), he visited the laborers and workingmen in their meetings in order to explain his ideas to them, do propaganda work and educate them.

Alone he managed the daily newspaper he had founded, "Il Popolo." At the same time he was editor of a scientific review on Trentino studies, called "Tridentum," and also of an illustrated weekly review, "Vita Trentina." Thus his journalistic activities alternated with his scientific work and the management of his printing establishment, which issued not only the above-mentioned magazines, but also other publications, some of them quite voluminous; among them we may mention his Guides to Trentino, written in three languages, which Battisti compiled himself for the Society Encouraging Foreign Tourists.

Sundays, summer and winter, he left the city to hold conferences in the valleys, or to make some geographic or geologic investigations in the mountains. He used a bicycle as often as possible, eating his frugal repast in the shadow of some tree along the way.

His greatest pleasure was to betake himself to the high mountains, preferably alone; alone he climbed over the rocks or ventured on the treacherous glaciers. But the pure sport of such mountain wanderings was almost always combined with some practical object—toponymic, geological, chartographical, or even military investigations, which he placed at the disposal of the Italian Government in this war.

He was a man of few words—also in this respect a true mountaineer. To him words were actions. He did not like to speak except before a large public or in the closest intimacy. The distinguished woman who became his wife soon after they both received their Doctor's Degree in the same university, told me that even in the privacy of his family he was not loquacious. She recounted, however, that on quiet summer evenings he en-

joyed taking her aside to their own little garden and speaking to her in the fullness of his heart, softly and tranquilly, like a confiding child, while the stars were sparkling in the sky of Trento not unlike the ceiling of a great cathedral supported by mountain pillars.

In public he spoke like a lion and a leader. He looked the ideal orator, imposing in appearance and voice. Above all, the immense force of his inner conviction transmitted itself irre-

The Cathedral of Trento

sistibly to his hearers. He was the opposite of rhetorical; but his words so pulsated with dramatic feeling as to convince from the very first. He never flattered the masses, never sought popularity; he liked to lead, not to be led.

For himself he asked nothing, always giving and never receiving. To carry on his national socialistic propaganda he sacrificed his private fortune, being content to live very modestly on his earnings as writer and publisher.

Cesare Battisti, had he so desired, could have acquired riches, honors, and an exalted social position. Had he entered

Italian public life, he would soon have attained one of the highest posts. But all this he disdained, preferring to remain in his little Trentino that nature had made a guardian of northern Italy, and therefore must be defended at all costs. He was attached to his country and was like one of those majestic pines that thrive only in the soil where they are born and cannot be uprooted without dying.

All his activities were carried on in the Trentino up to the beginning of the war. Wearisome work, mostly obscure, difficult, hardly understood, often opposed by the public, which allowed itself to be won, little by little, by this great fighter. It was only recently, just before the war, that Battisti became probably the most universally beloved man in Trentino, particularly by the young men, who saw in him the esthetic embodiment of the ideal of their youth and of the highest spirit of their country.

He entered Trentino public life as a socialist. Who was not a socialist in Italy between the years 1893 and 1898? That was the heroic period of Italian socialism, preached from the chair by Antonio Labriola, agitated by Bissolati and Turati—at that time brothers more than friends—at meetings, in the press and in Parliament.

The socialist ideal of that time did not take the form of an ideal of class; it was more a very high human principle supposed to be capable of transforming mankind for the common good. Such a socialist was Battisti, and the great task he had set himself was to convert the mass of Trentino laborers and peasants to socialism as he understood it.

This stand on his part, however, quite new for our country, immediately provoked the opposition of the clerical party for obvious reasons, and also caused some preoccupations in the old liberal national party, which feared that the theoretical internationalism preached by the socialists might weaken the national sentiments of the masses. For a time it really seemed as if the apprehensions of the liberals and nationalists were justified. But two or three years' experience sufficed for Bat-

The Dante Alighieri Square - Trento

tisti to improve his policy along national lines without in any way disavowing his socialistic ideas.

If socialism signified opposition to all tyranny, what greater oppression demanding redress was there to be found in the Trentino than that of Austria, encamped as mistress on our soil? If socialism signified the elevation of the masses, how could this be attained while tolerating and acquiescing in their continued subjugation by a foreign power?

Hence Battisti, from being purely a socialist, soon became both socialist and irredentist, and this he always remained. It was mostly due to him that in the Trentino we do not find, as in other countries, opposition of the socialistic ideal to the ideal of irredentism; the Trentino socialist party was at the same time sincerely Italian and patriotic.

Battisti soon occupied a leading position not only with regard to his party, but in the general public opinion of the country. One of the best opportunities presented itself in the matter of the Italian university, as we shall now see.

Since 1866, after the downfall of Venetia, the Italians remaining under Austrian rule asked that a university of their own be established at Trieste, the most important Italian city of Austria, since they would no longer be able to attend the University of Padua. Support and justification of such a demand was to be found in the Austrian constitution itself, an article of which guaranteed "equality of treatment to all nationalities," including the right of each nationality to study in its own language.

Austria constantly refused to make any concessions, and it was not until about 1897 that a few Italian courses in law and social science were instituted at the German university of Innsbruck. These concessions were of small account, however, and students as well as the public refused to recognize them for more than that, while the agitation for an Italian university at Trieste increased.

Austria refused to accede to this demand; instead, as a palliative, the number of Italian courses was increased from two to four, and then to six. The people of Trentino while always considering those courses as a sort of account, tried for obvious reasons to make certain that the instructors should be not only competent scientifically, but undeniably Italian in thought, so as to form the nucleus of the future university. Their deputies at Vienna were therefore charged to insist that the incumbents be chosen either in Italy or the irredente provinces. Their demands were granted in part. Austria refused to call to the chair of Criminal Law Scipio Sighele, born in Trentino, well known to scholars both in Italy and elsewhere, but she accepted the designation of other men who now are teaching in the universities of Bologna and Turin, and others who later attained important positions in Italy.

The Italians demanded that those courses be created as an independent Faculty of Law with the seat in Trieste, but the government acceded to this demand only in part.

An independent Italian School of Law was in reality established, but its seat was in the German city of Innsbruck instead of the Italian city of Trieste. A truly Austrian adjustment, which, of course, did not satisfy the Italians, who decided, however, not to deny the school their support—nor did it please the Germans, who did not limit themselves to demanding its transfer to other than German soil, but protested at the same time that "there was no more room for higher institutions of learning in Austria outside of German." And they calmly announced that they would use force to prevent the continuance of the school.

The Italians took up the challenge with the cry, "On to Innsbruck," supported by Battisti in his paper, "Il Popolo." Thus early in November, 1904, over two hundred Italian students gathered at Innsbruck to attend the opening of the School on November 3rd. Battisti was with them, and I can still see him sitting before me during my opening lecture in the midst of

all those students, who filled even the corridors, each listening to the lecture as well as to the sounds from the street, apprehensive of trouble.

The day passed quietly, however. But not so the evening; on leaving a social reunion, the Italian students were all attacked by a crowd of German students, who basely insulted them. The Italians gave proper retaliation, and when a large crowd came to the assistance of the Germans and surrounded the Italians, they were forced to use firearms in their own defense. In consequence there were several wounded, both German and Italian. The noise of pistol shots brought the city police upon the scene; only 12 German students were arrested, while there were 138 Italians imprisoned, among them Cesare Battisti.

The next day a veritable revolution broke out in Innsbruck. The populace ran through the streets of the city destroying and demolishing everything Italian, attacking unchecked any individuals suspected of being Italian, and finally demolishing the Italian Law School building. Only the bare walls were left standing.

Great was the outcry that followed, both in the irredente provinces and in Italy. Demonstrations were numerous, but a significant one which was to have been held at Venice on December 18, 1904, was prohibited by the Italian Government for fear of serious complications with Austria, whose attitude was becoming very threatening.

In the meantime our students languished in prison with Battisti while proceedings were instituted against them. The hatred of the Innsbruck inhabitants was such that it was impossible for me, who had the pleasure of taking care of my beloved students, to secure any extra food for them in the city. I had to have it sent from Trento in postal packages. After a month's imprisonment our students were released, as no tenable accusation could be found against them.

The end of the Brenta Valley and the mountains that Battisti loved to climb

The Italian Law School, however, was not reopened, either at Innsbruck or elsewhere; thus the mean arrogance of a low populace sufficed to deprive the Italians of the very small and only concession made them by the Austrian Government.

The agitation, however, for an Italian university at Trieste not only continued, but because of the wrong suffered, grew in intensity to such a degree as to become a national Italian question, not merely a question of irredentism. The Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Signor Tittoni, made it the base of negotiations with his colleague, Baron Aerenthal, Minister of Austro-Hungarian Foreign Affairs, at the time of the Bosnian crisis in 1908, but without result.

Battisti always remained at the head of the movement for an Italian university at Trieste, strongly opposing the acceptance of any compromise that would establish this university elsewhere, even in Trentino.

Another very important question pertaining to Trentino, and one in which Battisti took a prominent part, was the question of her administration, which Trentino wanted to have separated from that of the whole province of Tyrol; the so-called question of "administrative autonomy" of Trentino.

It is well known that Trentino was always wholly and exclusively Latin, and later Italian. At the time of the Romans it was the tenth *regio italica;* under the Lombards it was an independent duchy, and had an analogous constitution under the Carolingians. In 1027 it was made an independent principality, under the Bishop of Trento, which it remained until the abolition of ecclesiastical states in 1803. It is true that the political "independence" of the principality was very relative; the counts of Tyrol, formally its vassals, in reality soon became the political rulers under the guise of "ecclesiastical advocates," but, so far as its administration was concerned, the state could in reality call itself autonomous.

When Trentino passed into the hands of Austria in 1813,

this prerogative was lost entirely; it was simply annexed to the German province of Tyrol, even losing its name: not only this, but with the Tyrol, was forced to become, in 1818, a part of the Germanic Confederation, which always opposed its cession.

At the Congress of Frankfort, in 1848, the Trentino deputies made a formal request that Trentino be released from this monstrous union, basing their demand on the principle of nationality, which principle had been the reason for calling the Congress. They simply asked that Trentino be annexed to the Kingdom of Lombardy and Venetia, which at that time was under Austrian rule. But this just and modest request was unanimously rejected by vote.

One of the German deputies, undoubtedly a direct ancestor of the present Boche, explained his vote thus: "I wear German spectacles, and therefore see the world as German. . . . I only say: *Beati possidentes.* We have southern Tyrol (as the Germans called Trentino), and therefore we shall keep it. That is how I understand the right of the people! Nor do I think that I am asking too much when I propose the expulsion of these Trentino deputies who, with their request for separation, have pronounced their own death sentence. . . . ."

The people of Trentino refused to be intimidated by this and other threats; when in 1866 their hopes of being freed with Venice failed, they renewed their efforts to obtain at least an administrative separation from the Tyrol, but always in vain. Then it was decided to elect to the Diet at Innsbruck deputies who would pledge themselves not to attend, in the hope of obstructing the functions of the Diet, and in this way secure autonomy. This method proved fallacious, as the Germans took advantage of the absence of the Italians to administer the common funds in a manner scandalously favorable to the German part of the province, arousing in our country and in Parliament the most violent but at the same time the most useless protests.

Then another tactic was tried: not absence from the Diet, but full attendance for the purpose of holding up measures

whenever the Italians so desired, in the hope of inducing the Germans to consent to a separate administration of the two sections of the province.

Cesare Battisti was an eloquent advocate of this new move; to further it he was elected a deputy to the Diet, where he made several memorable speeches. The new tactics did not secure autonomy for Trentino, but they *did* serve to restrain the too insolent protectionism favoring the German part of the province.

Battisti's stand in national questions and his own patriotic sentiments which he had been able to transmit to the people, facilitated his election to Parliament in 1911, when at the elections by second ballot for the electoral district of Trento the liberals added their vote to that of the socialists. In Parliament he did not represent a party, but was truly the deputy of Trentino.

In an admirable speech before the House of Deputies at Vienna on December 12, 1912, against the military dictatorship in Trentino and the provocative policies of Austria against her ally, Italy, Battisti closed with the memorable words: "We demand that these mad policies be brought to an end. If in the Austrian bureaucratic repertory there be a fitting phrase, it is the phrase designating as 'irresponsible power' that of certain men. No matter what his name, be he the heir to the throne or someone else responsible for this policy of compression against Trentino, of waste and danger for all the people of Austria, no matter who the man, he is in reality irresponsible, insane, a man destined for the mad-house. We, therefore, rebel in the name of civilization and humanity and demand that such government be brought to an end; that the war party, this parasitic militarism, be done away with together with the madmen who are its leaders."

The political and national struggle in Trentino grew ever

more difficult and intense. The existing Pan-Germanic societies redoubled their aggressive and corruptive activities; new societies sprang up disguised under Italian names, while the authorities showed more and more openly that they favored the Germanization movement; on demand of the militarists Trentino was transformed into one great fortress and three-fourths of the military force of the province (more than an army corps) was removed to Trentino. The activities of the Pan-Germanists, disguised as tourists, employees and soldiers, became so provocative and created such an oppressive atmosphere that the only way out seemed to be war, the Germans thereby hoping to kill irredentism by annihilating the Italians, the Irredentists hoping to become united to Italy. But during those years, from 1911 to 1914, who imagined the war so imminent?

Italy was an ally of the Central Powers, but while in Austria and Trentino undoubted signs were not lacking as to the Austrian distrust of Italy, which distrust often assumed a threatening attitude, and the military party made no secret of its hostile intentions, Italy did not seem to realize the full significance of these facts. So she maintained a weak military policy, which made us fear increased servitude to the Triple Alliance for some time.

Thus Trentino had no choice but to resist until a more propitious time, meanwhile demonstrating to Italy and to the world in a thousand ways her true faith and eternal aspirations.

An especially favorable opportunity was offered to Trentino in 1912, when His Majesty, King Victor Emanuel, passed through Trentino on his way to Germany to attend the military manoeuvres. The Austrian government, anxious to have this passage take place in an almost clandestine manner, kept the time secret and saw to it that no one could get into the stations from Ala to Salorno; the only news that leaked out was that the King would pass through in the evening.

The royal train, in fact, left Ala shortly after 8 P. M. Suddenly, a mysterious signal from the station having given the

hint, a great flaming fire was started on the mountain peaks surrounding Ala, and countless fires on the ridges stretching along the railroad from Ala to Salorno answered the mysterious call, in succession, all along the way.

Who had thought of such a demonstration? Cesare Battisti. Who put it into execution? The students. Meanwhile, down the valley, hundreds of people whom the flaring fires had made aware of the happenings, ran to the railroad, swarming along its banks and loudly calling on the King of Italy to come back in these lands not as a guest, but as the rightful king.

Who would have imagined then that that ardent desire would be realized only six years later?

The murder of Grand Duke Franz Ferdinand in June, 1914, hit the world like a stroke of lightning. In Trentino the people soon realized that very likely it would precipitate a war. But what kind of a war? The war for freedom, or the war of an Italy allied with Austria?

For several days, even after Austria's official declaration of war on Serbia and all the other subsequent war declarations that followed at short notice, we remained in a state of incertitude. Moreover, Austria was artfully spreading news that Italy had decided to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Central Empires; of trainloads of Bersaglieri having been seen crossing Trentino on their way to Germany. This unheard of event took place: in Trento, in front of the Dante monument, military bands were actually playing the Italian royal march, and popular demonstrations of Italian patriotic feelings were encouraged in various towns by the authorities themselves.

Our consternation was keen, indeed; well we knew that Austria would not consent to make concessions to Italy, not even of Trentino, in repayment for Italy's participation in the war; that awful war that began with the assassination of Serbia, the violation of Belgium and the invasion of France.

When the truth became known that Italy had declared her-

self neutral, the joy in Trento was great. A little digression here, by your leave, is timely; it is justified by some unwarranted reflections we find these days (December, 1918) in some papers regarding Italy's participation in the war. It is rather emphatically asserted that Italy entered the war on the conclusion of a bargain, having first carefully weighed the inducements and the sacrifices, just as a business man would show some unwillingness to enter a deal if not satisfied beforehand that he is to reap more profit than loss from the enterprise.

Now, we ask, what bargain could Italy have made in 1914? None. She did not have even the time necessary to that end. She was not warned of her allies' intentions until the very eve of the war. How could she have bargained her neutrality so suddenly in favor of France, England and Russia? And still Italy's self-determined neutrality was quite sudden. Did not that move smack of a declaration of war with opening of hostilities more or less deferred? Nobody, either in Italy or abroad, was blind to the fact that the Central Empires would only bide their time for taking their revenge. Even at that time their papers called Italy's neutrality the "treason of their ally."

Moreover, Italy was then absolutely unprepared for war—England had no army, and the Central Group was beyond a doubt the stronger of the contending parties. Italy faced this storm, defiantly crossing her arms and making it known to France that she had nothing to fear from her, Italy. Did not this attitude of Italy strongly help to make possible the great victory of the Marne, in September, 1914? And, pray, what deal did Italy close at that time? None. Bright with the light of her enthusiasm, she risked her entire future. She was roused by those very principles that led the United States into the war —liberty and democracy.

If, later on, after nine months, and before entering the field of battle, Italy clearly set down her demands, what is there to wonder at? She simply asked that her rights be acknowledged to those lands which nature, culture, and ethnography point out to be her own. France, too, asserted that no peace be concluded

which would not consider the restitution, without compromise, of Alsace-Lorraine. But, and this *meminisse juvabit,* Italy, by her neutrality, accomplished the first determined acts of hostility against the Central Empires, asking for nothing, and at a moment when these countries were at the height of their power and she was altogether unprepared. We will now resume our theme.

Cesare Battisti came to Italy towards the end of August, 1914, together with his family, passing through, unobserved, on a train containing Italian immigrants that were returning home. He was no sooner in Italy than, first of all, he placed himself at the disposal of the Italian authorities, as well as all the valuable military material he had gathered in Trentino, his wide knowledge of localities and his valuable experience. He declared himself even ready to invade Austrian soil with armed bands of warm-hearted patriots for the purpose of provoking frontier incidents if such course was deemed useful to the furthering of Italian policies. But the moment had not yet come. Italy still had preparations to make, not only along military lines, but also in regard to her policies and the morale of the people.

To this work Battisti gave his whole soul, contributing the energies of his heart and of his oratory. He stumped in every Italian city of any importance. He welcomed objections—they added zest to his speeches and enhanced their didactic value. It was rather uphill work. Popular feeling against war ran high, and many interests were keen in keeping them so, either in good faith or in bad faith. In bad faith were the enemies of Italy, the open or secret agents of the Central Empires. In good faith were the other objectors, the upholders of the old Triple Alliance policy. They were to be feared as much as the faint-hearted and the hopeless kickers, who did not expect Italy to stand the burden of the war more than three months.

To this class of people Prince von Buelow addressed his sugared words; with them he tried to strike bargains; practising the very ancient trade of selling somebody else's wares, he offered Italy first a part of Trentino, then another one a

Territory which is to be restored to Italy in accordance with the Treaty of London of April, 1915 is indicated by the solid black sections.

In this map which has been reproduced from "Italy To-Day" (Vol. 1. No. 7) the portion designated as Southern Tyrol corresponds to the part called Upper Adige in this pamphlet, and which, together with Trentino forms the Venezia Tridentina.

little larger, then he offered somewhat more, even on the eastern side, on condition that Italy kept quiet and refrained from joining the fray.

The temptation was not small. Here Battisti's character, expressive of the spirit of his people from Trentino, appears to great advantage. Even when the return of the entire Trentino was promised, he, a resident of Trentino, did not hesitate to protest against the omission of the other unredeemed countries. And he declared that none of the residents of Trentino would even think of forsaking and abandoning their brothers from the Adriatic, to Austria, as a price for their own liberation. "Either everything or nothing." That was his watchword in those days, as it was on former occasions during his political struggles in Trentino.

For a time it almost looked as if the coalition of the pacifists, the downhearted, and the "triplicists" was to get the upper hand. Who can ever forget the days of May, full of anxiety, when Minister Salandra wanted to retire, while Giovanni Giolitti was coming to the fore with the offer of the "parecchio"—that is, the many inducements?

For Cesare Battisti, as well as for the true Trentino people, these were very thrilling times. Battisti displayed in those days a tremendous activity, and in Rome his voice sounded, together with the voice of our greatest living poet, Gabriele d'Annunzio. The healthy conscience of the Italian people won; Italy resolutely preferred the way of Camillus, Caesar, Garibaldi—*not* the way urged by Prince Buelow. On the 24th of May, 1915, the bells of the Capitol belfry rang joyously for the victory Italy had achieved over herself. War was declared. On that day, from the Capitol, Cesare Battisti launched to the countless crowds his famous appeal: "Everyone to the frontier—everyone with arms or with heart!"

The following day he enlisted as a private and left for Edolo in the Fifth Regiment of the Alpine Corps. Soon afterward he was sent to the border with his battalion, to the high mountains confronting the Tonale Pass to the north.

For seven long months he remained a private, sharing equally with his companions, the privations and dangers of the war as it is waged in the high mountains—and he no longer possessed the resiliency of youth. Never in those days did he utter a querulous word; he accepted his lot with the humility of an ascetic and the stout heart of a volunteer.

Cesare Battisti in the Uniform of the Alpini

If he expressed the desire of securing a commission as lieutenant, it was for the purpose of extending a little more help to his poor, stranded family; "as for myself," he writes, "I

would be content to remain a private to the finish."

His companions were peasants, shepherds and cattle herders from the highlands of Bergamo, a strong race hiding their natural goodheartedness under a rough exterior. Thus does he speak of them: "These Alpine soldiers from Bergamo (he writes August 7th) form a select body of troopers chosen from a select race of mountaineers; they are indeed giants. You should have seen them yesterday scaling crags during the night, bootless, so as to avoid the least noise, carrying cannons on their shoulders up nearly ten thousand feet, the thermometer in the meantime registering several degrees below zero. Then I saw them when they came back, wild with joy, carrying the trophies of their conquest—munitions, bombs, grenades, searchlights, etc. They perform actual miracles and undergo the severest hardships with indomitable fortitude."

But that war of positions, although of the hardest kind, was not enough to quench his warlike ardor, his craving for sacrifice, his constant yearning to do something more. He desires to be sent to the Isonzo, where the guns roar louder, where, he believes, the war of movements is imminent.

"I asked," he writes, "to be transferred to the Isonzo, or at least to some sector where the prospects of a forward movement—of actual fighting—are good where there is something to do—where I can not only conform to my duty, but also satisfy the legitimate ambition to show that our Ergisto Bezzi's teachings made a lasting impression on the young Italian generation."

He was denied the transfer to the Isonzo, but several encounters took place in the sector where he was stationed; he had his good share in them, displayed unusual valor, and was decorated for gallantry.

Nor is the Austrian army the only foe they have to contend with; there is also the winter that comes early, the blizzards, that even in summer send the mercury down several degrees below zero. "Up here," he still writes to the same friend, "we are having devilish cold weather; out of seven days, five are

blizzard days and two are gun-play days. It is a very hard life because almost all positions are carried after difficult climbs. Winds and blizzards are doing their worst, where there is not even room enough to build a shack. Sections of our corps are camping on peaks at an elevation of about nine thousand feet, where they look like eagle's nests."

From the Tonale he is sent to the Adamello—that is to say, to a much higher mountain—where he takes part in various encounters under the most awful circumstances amid the snow and the storms. On the 7th of November, he writes: "The other day we were engaged in action at an altitude of more than 10,000 feet, standing in the snow from four o'clock in the morning until late in the evening—still we got off untouched either by the frost or the persistent attacks of enemy artillery. But gallantry and luck are not sufficient to make an advance; all the encounters we have brought to a successful end were tactically impaired by the fury of the blizzards; some nights the temperature was as low as twenty-three degrees C. below zero."

At last, in December, 1915, he is given his commission as lieutenant and takes leave from the Fifth Alpine Regiment—feelingly, because he had grown fond of his "gallant Bergamaschi"—and enters the Sixth Regiment, assigned to the Monte Baldo sector. Here he finds conditions quite different from those he experienced on the Adamello. Although the thermometer marks an equally low temperature, still the cold is far more endurable. Here he helps in the construction of blindages and redoubts. "I should have liked far better," he writes, "to have been down in the valley helping the Bersaglieri in their capture of Lappio, but obedience is the foremost virtue of the soldier. And so I adapted myself to the hermitage assigned to me and becoming a carpenter, road builder and mason, during the day, while I spent the long nights reading patriotic poetry to my soldiers." Does not this utterance reveal his soul?

In this sector his stay was a short one, for after a few days his Alpine troops were sent down to Loppio as reinforcements. With his platoon he was the first to enter six houses at one end

The Adamello Group where Battisti fought during several winter months

of the hamlet, and for the first time had the opportunity of seeing another kind of warfare, more awful than the high mountain warfare which was so well known to him. On December 24, 1915, he writes: "War here looks far more lugubrious and tragic than up in the mountains: here war is not only waged by soldiers against soldiers, but it vents its brutality against everything, against any kind of material, against defenseless people, against the land itself."

Fifteen days later he took part in the famous engagement at Malga Zures, above Nago, where, as he wrote himself, "many patriots from Trentino fell, displaying such conspicuous heroism that it was noticed and recorded by the colonel in his daily records. The feeling on both sides ran so high during that engagement that when the munitions gave out the fight was continued with rocks and rifle-butt blows in a terrible, general mix-up."

After this engagement, he was cited again for another medal and advanced to the rank of first lieutenant for gallantry. As first lieutenant he was sent to the general headquarters of the First Army at Verona; his duties consisted in accompanying commissions of inspection to the front, and other special work.

With more leisure hours during the evenings, Battisti disposes of these, not for rest, but for more work; and this, after having been at the front for seven months without interruption, after having risked his life a thousand times, and just after emerging from a most terrible and bloody battle. Indeed, he appears like a hero from Plutarch. Trentino is, of course, the subject of these lucubrations wrenched from sleep and rest—Trentino, the great passion, the religion of his life—Trentino, for which he died.

"At the time I joined the army," he says, "I had left unfinished a historical work, entitled 'Forerunners and Martyrs of the Redemption of Trento.' It was a series of biographies, beginning with Gazzoletti and the politicians from 1848 and 1866, down to our Garibaldini, to Dr. Carlo de Bertolini, to Scipio Sighele; to these I ought now to add, unhappily, Albino Zenatti."

This was not the only work that kept him busy in that period of supposed rest; he left many memoirs on the viability of Trentino and other economic problems, representing his preparative work for the post-war reconstruction.

Meanwhile, the Austrian offensive in the highlands was under way. The 27th of April, 1916, in a letter to me, he writes: "Austrian preparations against us are assuming enormous proportions. Austria's intention is to repeat against us the German attack on Verdun, but we are well organized. We can oppose not only men brimming over with enthusiasm and courage, but munitions aplenty and no end of defenses."

The offensive takes place, and nothing can hold Battisti in Verona any longer; he insistently requests to be sent to the front. The end of May his request is granted, and he is given the command of a marching company belonging to the Vicenza battalion of the Sixth Alpine Regiment. Attached to the same company are Dr. Fabio Filzi, from Rovereto, a friend and admirer of Battisti, and forty very young soldiers of the district of Verona, who, though simple peasants, had asked to be assigned to that company in order to fight under Battisti. Can we conceive anything finer than this spontaneous offering of themselves to an idea represented in a man?

The 29th of May, Battisti, with his Alpine soldiers, entered Trentino territory at Vallarsa, and during almost the entire month of June one assault followed the other. From those rugged crags he wrote many a touching letter to his Ernesta, his life companion, the egregious woman that now so nobly guards his name. Sometimes, between the pages, there was the fragrance of the lily-of-the-valley, the blue forget-me-not, or the scarlet rhododendron; but later, when the troops reach the limit of the eternal snows, he writes: "I cannot send you any more flowers. I am encamped up in the mountains at 6,000 feet; the scenery is marvelous. A magnificent flora just begins to sprout under the snow. You know how glad I would be to send you more flowers! I am always thinking of you and my dear children!"

Gigino, Camillo, Livietta, these are the names of Bat-

tisti's three children. All his thoughts, while campaigning, are for them and their mother, and he has faith that their love for him will carry him safely through. "I strongly believe in and feel assured of my individual luck," he writes, "you and my children protect me."

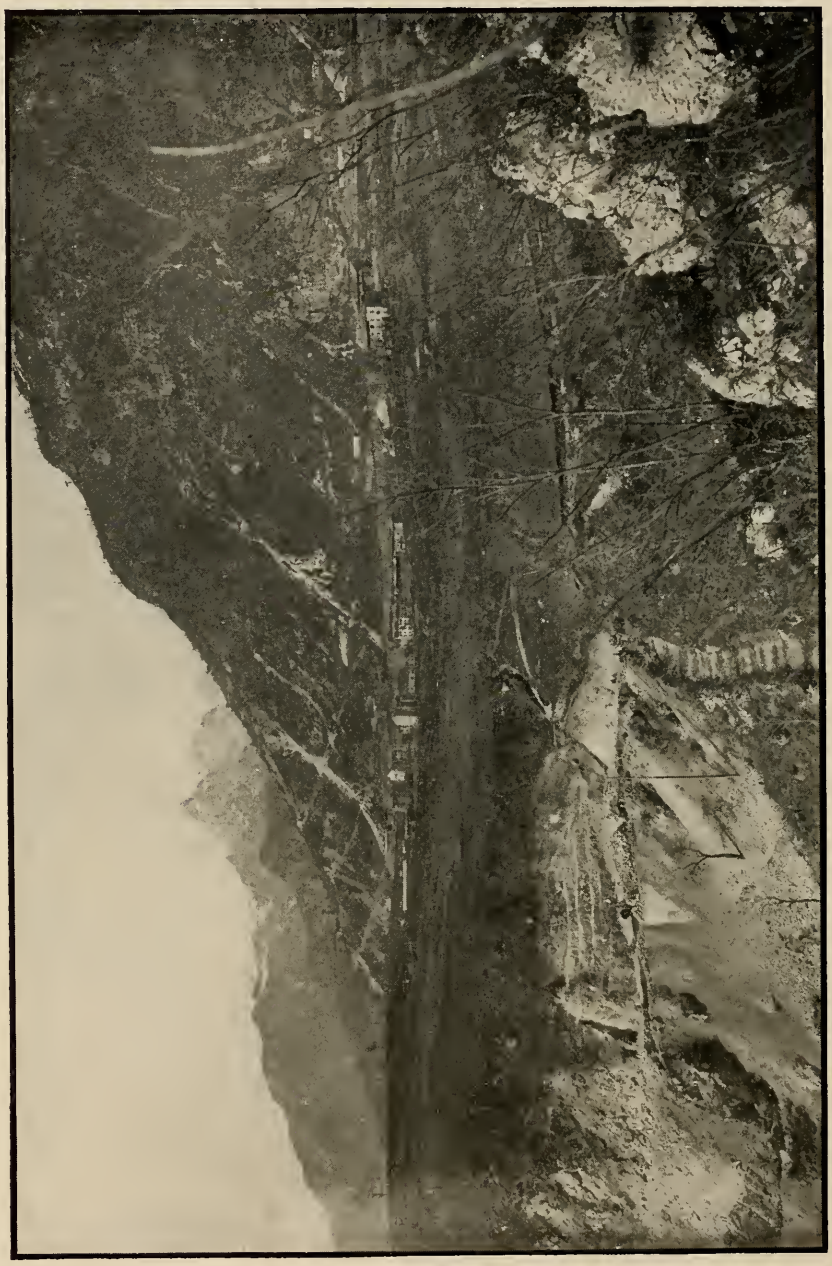
On the Fourth of July he reaches the summit of the fatal mountain where he was to be captured. He writes to his wife: "I am in receipt of yours of the 23rd instant. It reaches me on the eastern top of Monte Corno, an ugly conglomerate of decaying rocks that we have been trying to get from the Austrians. It is a desperate conflict. We live, hanging, so to speak, to the walls of the mountain, without tents, often without food, always without water, eating snow instead. The war we are waging these days is terrible, engagements following one another in rapid succession. But it is a necessity. We must win—we shall win."

The following day, writing to Gigino, he says: "I know that you are anxious to enlist, but I am very much afraid that you will not succeed owing to the precarious condition of your health. Do not let this discourage you; there are many other ways of fulfilling your duty to your country on other occasions."

It is to be noted that Gigino was then only sixteen years old; that his father was not dissuading him from enlisting, but simply trying to console him in the event of his not being accepted as a volunteer. This Gigino tried repeatedly, but in vain. He was accepted only in the winter of 1917, and the writer of this booklet had the honor of being his instructor in the Alpine company to which he was attached.

At the end of June, 1916, Battisti sent to Miss Avis Waterman, an American, then war correspondent for the *Times* at the Italian front, that famous letter in which every word is a glorification of the Italian war and of the Alpine Corps. It was published in all the newspapers a few days after his death.

On the 10th of July the battle of Monte Corno took place, and during this engagement he was taken prisoner. His com-



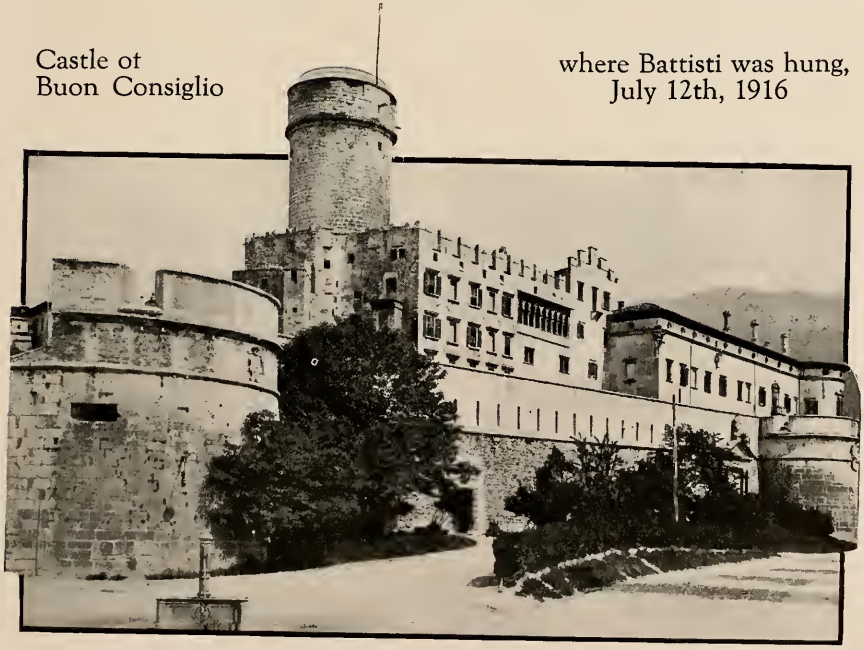
Vallarsa Valley. In the background Monte Corno, where Battisti was taken prisoner, July 10th, 1916

pany had succeeded in securing an advanced position, but a deep curtain of gunfire forbade any communication with the units in the rear and completely isolated the company. This enabled the Austrians to surround these heroes and capture them after they were greatly reduced in numbers.

Battisti and Filzi kept on fighting miraculously to the very last without receiving a scratch. They were made prisoners. They knew what kind of death was in store for them; they might have put an end to their lives, but they did not. It was rumored that a renegade recognized them. I do not know. Such infamous betrayal was not necessary, as Battisti was altogether too universally known; he could not rely on his incognito, nor was he the man to deny his identity if questioned. He consciously entered the path of martyrdom, unhesitatingly, of his own free will.

The Austrians expressed indecent joy at the conspicuous capture—they lost no time in sending the prisoner to Trento. A Czech corporal, who later deserted to our side, reported that he had seen him on the road between Trento and Calliano, proceed-

Castle of Buon Consiglio where Battisti was hung, July 12th, 1916



Battisti being conducted before the Military Tribunal in the Castle of Buon Consiglio

ing afoot with calm and assured demeanor, surrounded by a squad of soldiers headed by a first corporal. Another witness recounts that at a certain point the squad made a halt to rest and entered the cottage of a road worker. Battisti, his tongue parched with thirst from the excessive heat and the dust of the road, asked for a drink. The corporal agreed. He had just washed his hands in a basin of water, and this was the drink he offered to Battisti.

In Trento the police had gathered in the square of the Castello a villainous mob, mostly plainclothes policemen, who had been paid to jeer Battisti. The police commissioner was impudent enough to say to Battisti: "Your Honor, here are your people greeting you." To which Battisti made the following rejoinder: "No, sir, the true people of the Trentino are not here; they are in the trenches, where they are fighting for Italy, or in the concentration camps or in the prisons, where you have confined them, or in their homes, where they weep for the ruin which you have brought upon their country."

He was to be executed on the 12th of July. Austria thought proper to place on the records of civilization the glorious event, for her, by reproducing in all the illustrated papers of the empire the photograph of Battisti, accompanied from his cell to the scaffold, with these words underneath the illustration: "The last walk of the arch traitor, Dr. Cesare Battisti."

In the illustration Battisti shows his wonted demeanor of a poet and a knight; those poor soldiers, whose duty it is to escort him, and the big, ignoble policeman at their head, look more like servile followers than executioners. The glorious light that irradiates from the hero contrasts with the expression of subdued shame in his custodians.

Before stepping on the scaffold, a priest of Czech extraction gave the hero the last religious rights. "I entreat you," Battisti said to him, "to make it known to my brothers that I am glad to die for Italy, without fear of the Austrians and their gallows."

Soon afterward, Lang, the hangman, placed the noose around his neck and pushed him off his feet so that the body would hang in empty space—but the rope, too weak to support his gigantic frame, snapped. Battisti, half-dead, fell to the ground; he loosened the rope, still taut around his neck, and once more, for the last time, shouted in a hoarse voice: "Viva l'Italia, abbasso l'Austria" (Italy forever, down with Austria!).

The hangman's second attempt was successful. He and the witnesses seem to be very proud of this accomplish-

The hangman placing the noose around Battisti's neck

ment, as is shown by the photograph which is here reproduced, and which was circulated among the popular magazines by the Austrian Government—not being then aware of her own guilt. Nothing is more impressive than the contrast between the Christ-like face of the martyr and the soul-deprived face of the hangman, with its ignoble grin.

His companion and disciple, Dr. Fabio Filzi—another noble figure of a soldier and a martyr—followed a few moments later as young Damiano Chiesa had preceded them two months before.

This most awful crime of Austria caused a mighty sensation throughout the civilized world. In Rome, on the 20th of July, an imposing mass-meeting at the Capitol solemnly swore to win the war and erect a monument to the martyr-hero in the liberated city of Trento as a perpetual reminder to future generations of his sacrifice for Italy.

Every year since then has witnessed imposing public dem-

onstrations in Italy as well as abroad. This year, some time before the victory of the Piave, more than nine thousand refugees from Trentino signed an address to H. M., the King of Italy, the occasion being the second anniversary of the martyrdom of Cesare Battisti, in which they expressed their assurance that the great hope of the martyr would soon be an accomplished fact, declaring themselves prepared for any sacrifice.

In Trentino itself, despite the suspicious vigilance of Austria, Battisti's cult soon spread. Effigies of the hero so often found sewed in the garments of the people, between the cloth and the lining, bear witness to this.

Among the expressions of sympathy extended in this saddest of occurrences by notable people, I want to quote Dr. Osusky, now a representative in London of the Czecho-Slovak republic:

"Battisti was sentenced and hanged as a traitor, which he was not, having been staunchly faithful until death to Italy, his true country. If the Austro-Germans and Magyars, by way of a smashing defeat, could in the future become new human creatures, they would bless the memory of Battisti, who spent the best of his strength to save Italian blood from the Austrian tyrants and to stop them from their continuous sins against Providence and humanity."

Allow me also to quote a distinguished American woman, Mrs. Vera B. Whitehouse, director of the American Bureau on Public Information in Berne. She writes: "Let me, a simple citizen of the United States, express to the Italians my heartfelt sympathy on this occasion of the anniversary of their great patriot's death, who was so horribly murdered because guilty of believing in the principles of liberty and justice for which our countries are fighting, for which he worked and fought. With the inspiration that comes from his death, let us strive to obtain with quicker, redoubled exertion the only possible solution—victory over despotism."

With the murder of Cesare Battisti Austria thought to have entirely broken the fighting spirit of the Italian irredenti. Quite

the contrary. A few weeks later we see Nazario Sauro, an Istrian, sailing from Ancona bent on a very dangerous expedition to the opposite Adriatic shore. He is caught and, sharing the fate of Battisti, thrown into prison, then hanged. It is the answer of the martyr from the Adriatic shore to the martyr

The Hangman proudly exhibiting Battisti's dead body

hailing from the Alps of Trentino, cementing the two sections of the country in one single faith, one single ideal, against one common enemy.

A few days after the execution of Cesare Battisti, a young Trentino lieutenant aviator, Baron Vittorio Emanuele a Prato, flying low over the Castello at Trento, amid a storm of bullets, let fall on the grave a huge wreath of flowers tied with a ribbon on which was the dedication: "To the martyr-hero, who will be glorified by redeemed Trento in the near future of our liberation."

The day of liberation was not yet near, but it came. Italy deserved it, and won it by her struggles, her sacrifices and her bravery without end.

At the battle of the Piave, begun on October 22nd, fifty-three Italian divisions, aided by three British divisions, two French divisions, one Czecho-Slovak division and one American regiment against seventy-three very efficient Austrian divisions, Italy victoriously occupied Trento on November 3rd, before the signing of the armistice.

A few days later, when King Victor Emanuel III, entered Trento, and received the local authorities in the city hall, he was approached by a young aspirant lieutenant in the Alpine Corps. The young man was Gigino Battisti, son of the martyr. The King embraced him as a beloved son. Later His Majesty gave to the memory of Cesare Battisti the highest reward for bravery, the golden medal.

Cesare Battisti has already attained immortality in the hearts of all Italians. His martyrdom represents the greatest moral defeat of Austria; on the other hand, it represents Italy's most sublime aspirations.

But the people of Trentino will always keenly feel his loss. He was an integral part of the country, which he knew in all its aspects; he had walked its rugged dales so often, he had studied it so well. Battisti alone knew how to reveal with the touch of a master the innermost and most lovable feelings of our mountaineers. He was a counsellor as well as a leader of men, and possessed the grit that knows no defeat. Nobody can recall a word of discouragement whose utterance adverse circumstances may have justified.

He spoke little, but accomplished much. So his voice was heard only when he deemed it necessary to overcome obstacles, to encourage flagging spirits, to urge to more strenuous efforts.

He put reality above appearance, action before words, and made sacrifice to an ideal the constant vocation of his life. We do not know which to praise more—his strong will or his spirit of self-denial; both qualities are equalled only by his intense love for the poor, the humble, the toiler, and his pure love of his native Trentino and mother Italy. His nationalism was not jingoism, but blended harmoniously with the high aspirations and ideals of a sane socialism.

Having dedicated his whole life to his country, to her he also gave the last full measure of devotion. But Trentino, too, through him, offered to the mother country one of the best among its sons; the most heroic of all. And whenever our country shall be confronted by a moral or political crisis, it will suffice to remember Battisti in order promptly to find the right way.

For many a century Trentino will remember Cesare Battisti. But not Trentino alone, nor Italy, must be proud of such a citizen; the whole world should cherish and honor his memory, for he was not only a soldier fighting for the unification of Italy, but the soldier of a universal idea of justice and good-will. A leaf for him in the national history of Italy, a page for him in the history of all mankind!

APPENDIX

The Venezia Tridentina (Trentino and Alto Adige)

The Trentino is, together with the Upper Adige, a part of a compact geographical region, more particularly called Venezia Tridentina. It is formed by the southern part of the old Austrian province of Tyrol; it is bounded on the north by the watershed line of the Central-Oriental Alps. The waters that run to the north find their outlet in the Black Sea. The waters that run to the south, are all tributaries of the Adige River, which eventually finds its outlet in the Adriatic. It belongs, therefore, geographically to Northern Italy.

About 200 B. C. this region was occupied by the Romans, and the greater part, including the Trentino and the Bolzano District in the Upper Adige, formed under Augustus and his successors the tenth Italian region, together with the Venezia and Istria. In the Middle Ages the Trentino was practically governed by Bishops, who therefore, bore the title of Princes. Since the XII Century, however, it was, as far as the foreign relations were concerned, under the political control of the Counts of Tyrol, who later became the Emperors of Austria.

In 1803 the Princedom of the Bishops was abolished and the Trentino continually changed hands during the turbulent Napoleonic Era, until in 1810, it was annexed by Napoleon to the Kingdom of Italy under the name of Department of the Upper Adige. This régime, of which the population still bears grateful memories, lasted too short a time, because in 1813 Austria again took possession of the Trentino and annexed it, in 1818, to the Germanic Confederation. This prevented the Trentino from obtaining its freedom when Lombardy and Veneto were freed in 1859, 1866.

In the Trentino the population is exclusively and completely Italian. Its surface is 6,356 square kilometers and the resident population in 1910 was 386,437, with an average of 61 inhabitants for each square kilometer.

On the contrary, the population is mixed with prevalence of the German element in the territory of the Upper Adige, which has a surface of 7,178 square kilometers. It is largely a mountainous country, and not very productive. It had in 1910 a resi-

dent population of 243,503 with an average of 33.7 inhabitants for each square kilometer.

In ancient times even the population of the Upper Adige had been Romanized. But with the passing of the centuries the Barbaric invasions succeeded in denting the compactness of the Latin population, and the successive actions of the Austrian Governments further favored this result. Nevertheless, the Italian element is still very important. Two valleys (Gardena and Badia) still speak a Latin dialect while, beside that, more than 30,000 Italians are scattered in the Adige and Isarco valleys, most of them between Salorno and Merano.

In the Trentino there is a large and varied agriculture, from the vineyards to the silk worm, from fruit groves to forests, from grain to pasture lands and live stock; eighty-seven per cent. of her surface is productive area. More than two-thirds of this productive area is constituted of pasture lands in the high mountains, and woods. It is a country of small landed proprietors, but the pasture lands and the woods are generally the property of the municipalities who allow the use of them to the citizens.

In the Trentino there are very fine summer and winter resorts. In the Upper Adige the climate is somewhat more bitter, and the productive area is smaller than in Trentino. There the vineyards are only located in the Bolzano and Merano Districts. The principal products are pasture lands, live stock and wood.

Very important in Trentino, as well as in the Alto Adige, is the tourist industry, for tourists come here in summer as well as in winter, to enjoy the beauty of the landscape and to climb the celebrated mountains, especially the Dolomites. After its annexation to the Kingdom of Italy, the Trentino will have a wonderful industrial and commercial future, that had, so far, been unobtainable under the Austrian Government, on account of being too remote from the markets and on account of the competition that was offered to any Italian industry by the interests of Bohemia and Lower Austria, who possessed rich coal and iron mines.

It is calculated that in the Trentino there exists the possibility of obtaining more than 200,000 H.P. from its water courses; and

a little more than that can be obtained in the Alto Adige. This calculation was made before the war when the price of coal was infinitely lower than at the present time, so that the financial advantage of the transformation of the hydraulic power into electric power is now greatly increased.

The Venezia Tridentina constitutes the principal door opening from Italy northward, and a formidable bridge-head in the very body of the Italian peninsula. If this should remain in foreign hands, Italy will never be secure. Sixty-six times the barbarians invaded Italy through this passageway, thanks to the control they happened to have on both the Alto Adige and the Trentino. The absolute possession of these regions is therefore for Italy an undeniable necessity. And this does not clash with any principle of nationality, inasmuch as about seven-tenths of the entire population of the Venezia Tridentina is Italian or Latin.

The Trentino is a country that has given Italy many men who have made history, such as Alessandro Vittoria, a sculptor that could well be compared to Bernini, a painter such as Giovanni Segantini, the greatest of Italian landscape painters of the past century; Giovanni Prati, the poet; the living musician, Antonio Zandonai; Antonio Rosmini, the great philosopher of the past century, and Mr. Caproni, the inventor and constructor of the famous aeroplanes which aided so efficiently in winning the war.

In the present war the Trentino has given Italy about three thousand volunteers, one hundred and fifty of whom were killed on the battlefield and five hundred were wounded. We are still uncertain about the number of those who shared the fate of our great hero and martyr, Cesare Battisti.

All the political parties of the Trentino have always been staunch defenders of the national principle. For having refused to bow to Austria's will, which amounted to renouncing his ideals, the Prince Bishop of Trento, Monsignor Endrici, who can be compared to Cardinal Mercier for nobility and loftiness of character, was interned in a monastery near Vienna, and forbidden to correspond with the members of his Diocese.

Over 40,000 Trentini were interned in concentration camps in northern Austria and Styria, and treated not much better than common criminals, compelled to live in hideous surroundings and promiscuity, in unhealthy barracks, being furnished with only the bare necessities to prevent them from actual starvation.

The Venezia Tridentina is now actually reunited to Italy as it was under the Roman emperors, thanks to the great Italian victory of last November and to the support of the Allies. There is no doubt but that the Peace Conference will also assign her entirely to Italy, as is fair and just.

G. L.

Three Martyrs of the Trentino

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The Dante Alighieri Monument
in Trento